

SOUTHPORT CYCLING TOWN

End of Programme Report (2008-2011)

July 2011



www.southportcycletown.gov.uk

1. Introduction

Southport is a popular coastal resort and shopping centre with a population of 90,000. It attracts 4.5m visitors per year. Its main economic activities are tourism, retail, leisure and business. Before the project began, Southport was already inherently cycle-friendly with a good number of cycle routes in existence.



The town is compact and largely flat, with an abundance of relatively lightly-trafficked, wide roads, many with limited pressures for on-street parking, offering opportunities to promote cycling.

The key aims of the strategy for the delivery of the Southport Cycling Town project was to maximise the implementation of the Southport Investment Strategy to develop a 'culture of cycling' in Southport based around three themes. The 3 themes were :-

- To encourage cycling for **Tourism and Leisure** - through the development of a high quality cycle network around the seafront area, access to the Sefton coast and the development of links to the town centre.
- **Regeneration** – there are 2 main areas of regeneration within the town, the Marine Park area on the seafront and the area to the east of the town around Kew. It was proposed to serve these areas with a number of high quality cycle routes. A programme of targeted marketing and promotion would back up the development of these routes.
- **Schools** – getting the cycling habit at a young age is vital and the aim by the end of the project was to have 15% of secondary school children cycling to school. This would be with a particular emphasis on encouraging teenage girls to cycle as they are less likely to participate in physical activity.

The headline targets set for the cycle town project were:

- 10% mode share for intra Southport trips
- 50% increase in cycle journeys to school
- 300% increase in leisure trips



The 10% mode share target for intra Southport trips has always been a longer term aspiration and as much of the infrastructure was delivered after summer 2010 it's impact is not demonstrated in the monitoring figures to date, although there has been a significant increase in leisure cycling around the seafront area. It is anticipated that this will be reflected in the monitoring figures for the 2011 summer season.

Due to the difficult economic climate, the anticipated development around the seafront and to the east of the town has not materialised. This has had an impact on the anticipated increase in cycling levels and also the potential matched funding available to deliver infrastructure at either end of the east west link.

2. Programme Delivery

2.1 Infrastructure

Throughout the project, we have developed a high quality cycle network around the seafront area, access to the Sefton Coast and the development of key linkages to the town centre.



Cycle Routes

We have provided over 16km of new and improved cycle routes across the town. Before 2008 the network was largely confined to the Transpennine Trail (NCN62) running south from Southport seafront, together with other disjointed sections of the coastal path to the north and a network of routes to the east of the town serving the local area.

The Southport Cycle Town programme has concentrated on developing a leisure network around the seafront and linking the network in the east to the town centre and the north of the town to improve access to education and employment opportunities.

Seafront

Over 9km of route have been developed around the seafront and improving the Coastal path. There is now a continuous 16 km off road route along the coast, linking Formby to the south and West Lancs, in the north. Further improvements have been made to routes around the seafront, including a circular route around the Marine Lake linking all the major tourist attractions.

Routes to East

Two separate routes have been developed linking to the existing network around the east of the town. This area is the principal site for development in the town over the foreseeable future.



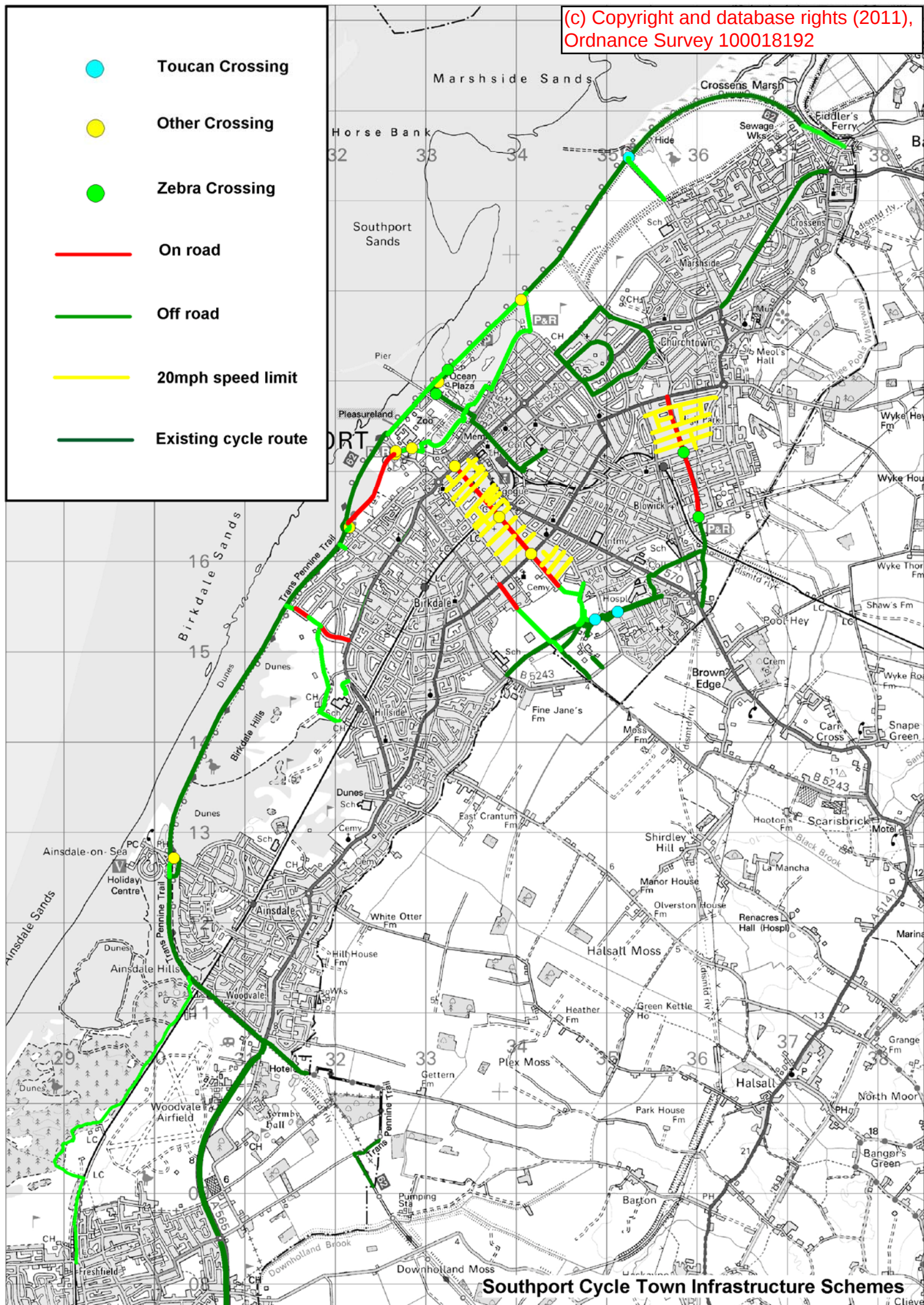
The first route along Portland Street provides a direct link from the Seafront and Town Centre along newly traffic calmed roads with protected crossing points at major road junctions. Speed tables were used extensively to further reduce vehicle speeds on a road which is relatively lightly trafficked. The route then travels across the Newlands Community Woodland site to complete the route to the business development area on an off-road route.

The second route along Wennington Road provides a link from the North of the Town Centre to an existing route which has been developed close to the Park & Ride site at Kew. Again the road was traffic calmed and crossing points with major roads were improved. This now allows cyclists to gain access from the Churchtown and High Park Areas direct to the Business Park, Hospital and 6th Form College using a combination of relatively quiet traffic calmed roads and off road facilities.

The two routes total 4km within newly traffic calmed roads. At the same time a further 9.8km of surrounding roads have had speed limits reduced to 20mph to improve access and safety for local residents.



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2.2 Signage and Cycle Parking



Themed Leisure Routes

Seven new 'Southport' themed routes have been developed. These routes have used 245 signs contributing a further 76km of signed routes.

The routes are of varying lengths with the shorter cycle routes being ideal for less experienced cyclists as they provide the opportunity to practice away from the roads. The longer routes can provide more experienced cyclists with the chance to discover a whole new side to Southport.

The routes are also ideal for families who want to enjoy a ride together as they have been carefully selected and are well sign posted. All the routes are designed to start at the Eco Centre, however, they can be joined at any point.

Signing

Before the project there was very little cycle route signage in Southport, with the exception of the Transpennine Trail.

Over the last three years, 27km of signed routes have been developed, through the provision of 151 signs, using times rather than distances.

One of our key themes of the Cycle Town project was Leisure and we were keen to add to the cycling routes in and around the town, particularly for the leisure cyclist.



Flyers have been produced for each of the routes, each with easy to follow maps and images of sites, the cyclist can expect to see when following the route. They can be downloaded direct from the website www.southportcycletown.gov.uk or collected at many locations within Southport including the cycle hire centres and Tourist Information.



Cycle Parking

Southport town centre is a busy tourist resort therefore there is a high demand for both long stay and short stay cycle parking. Additionally, the centre of the town is a conservation area therefore working closely with our conservation team has been crucial in coming up with the right cycle parking for the area.

Black powder coated Sheffield stands with tapping bars were chosen to provide the bulk of the new cycle parking however in some areas, stainless steel stands were installed to fit in with the surrounding area. We have also trialled some new bespoke Penny Farthing type cycle stands in the town centre and these proved to be so popular that they have now been installed at several of the larger parks in the area.



Bespoke Penny Farthing Stands on Lord Street



Cycle Parking provided for the Scarisbrick Hotel

An online form was also put on the website which members of the public or businesses could fill in to let us know if they thought any existing cycle parking was in need of improvement or new cycle parking was needed. This was particularly aimed at shops or businesses where cycle parking could provide another option for customers visiting the premises.

Throughout the project, a total of 608 new spaces have been provided on street and within businesses, this does not include schools.

- 92 spaces have been provided at workplaces, which includes covered shelters at the Scarisbrick Hotel and Arriva.
- Bespoke Cycle Parking Shelter for the Eco Visitor Centre providing 20 spaces.
- 116 spaces for Leisure users including 6 spaces in Ainsdale library, 6 spaces in Dunes Leisure Centre and over a 100 spaces in parks and open spaces.
- 202 new spaces in Southport town centre for shoppers and workers and a further 168 new spaces in local shopping areas.



Eco Centre Bespoke Secure Cycle Shelter

2.3 Schools

Between July 2008 and March 2011 we have worked intensively with 22 of the 25 (20 primary and 5 secondary) Southport schools. Only a lack of time has prevented us working with all of them, but in the next academic year we intend to engage with the remaining few. The programmes delivered have included Bikeability, Bike It, Go ride, school assemblies and talks, maintenance sessions, computrainer sessions, transition to high school projects and infrastructure schemes.

Most of the school programmes have been, and are continuing to be, delivered by our numerous cycling development officers (CTC, Bike it and British Cycling) and Sefton Council's Travel Awareness and Safety staff plus any volunteers, of which there are many, who happen to be around at the time. We have a very 'all hands on deck' approach to delivering our cycling programmes and believe in utilising everyone's skills to the full and having lots of fun on the way. The main programmes we have delivered can be summarised under the following headings:-



Shoreside Primary School

Bikeability

All Southport schools participate in our Bikeability courses. During this period, 1518 children have received both level 1 and level 2 bikeability training and this equates to two thirds of the number of children targeted for each year of the project. Whilst we recognise that this is a significant percentage we are aiming to increase these numbers by working with the schools where the uptake is lower.

We have however experienced a steady increase year on year in the number of children receiving Bikeability level 3 training. The demand for Bikeability training at all levels has been fuelled by the number and range of programmes being delivered within the schools.

Bike it

Bike It activities have been delivered to children from reception through to year 6 in the primary schools and years 7 and 8 in the high schools. As part of the programme thousands of children and their accompanying adults have cycled to school and received free Bike it breakfasts as a result, learned how to repair punctures and do basic bike maintenance and improve their cycle skills.

Over 900 children have learned to ride without stabilisers for the first time and surprisingly a significant number of them are upper primary aged children. Hands up surveys conducted in Bike It schools have shown a significant increase in the number of children cycling to school on a regular basis.



*St John's CE Primary School –
Bike it breakfast*



*Kings Meadow Primary School
Maintenance session*

Cycle Forum for young people

This forum has been formed as part of the project and consists of 13 young people, together with cycling officers, head teachers and members of the Southport Cycle Town Team to discuss the cycling issues they feel affect young people. The forum meet once a term and plan to continue to do so.

Cycle parking and infrastructure

All the Southport schools had school travel plans and so taking into account the schemes planned as part of that programme we surveyed all the schools to ascertain the level and quality of cycle parking available and how adequate this was proving to be. Taking into account a schools commitment to cycling within their travel plan we worked closely with our school travel colleagues and identified a number of schools in need of assistance.



Stanley High School

In total we provided extra cycle storage at 4 out of the 5 high schools and 9 primary schools and by doing so almost doubled the number of cycle parking spaces available. This has not fully met the demand as the programmes being delivered continue to increase the need for more storage, but with the funding and time available we have been able to almost double the number of secure cycle storage places available. We also improved walking and cycling access at Greenbank High School.



Bike club

The first Bike Club in the country was established in 2009 at Greenbank High School and was celebrated in grand style with a red carpet event. Pupils from this, all girls, school produced a DVD of the cycling issues in their local area. The DVD had its premier at the Southport Cycle Town Quarterly Meeting in July 2009.

Since then several Sefton schools have successfully applied for Bike Club funding and are either in the process of delivering activities or due to shortly. Two of the schools used their Bike club funding to build pump style tracks on their school fields.

These schools now not only deliver an after school mountain bike club but are incorporating mountain biking into the PE curriculum, school sports day and extra curricular activities for hard to engage pupils. Further schools are planning on delivering 'on road' training and led rides in and around the school environment coupled with basic bike maintenance.

Southport Cycling Club has developed a thriving junior section with assistance from both the CTC Champions project and Bike Club school related activities. They are using their Bike Club funds to further develop their coaches, including training some of their younger members to act as ride leaders and mentors with the junior section. Woodvale and Ainsdale Community Centre have delivered a whole range of cycling activities, including regular family cycle rides and maintenance sessions and trips to Rampworx BMX Park, Delamere Forest, Llandegla Trail Centre and an upcoming trip to the Lake District.



Stanley High School

Computrainer

Our Computrainer (cycling simulator) now has an increased capacity of 8 cycles from the former 2 and has been in regular use in all 5 Secondary Schools to encourage the youngsters to get back on their bikes. It has also played a large part in the training of pupils for the inter school races which were established as part of the cycle town project and have taken place over the last 3 years.

Several hundred boys and girls have experienced the fun and benefits of using the computrainer and are continuing to do so. In some schools it often replaces traditional PE lessons. In a number of the Southport secondary schools cycling has now become part of the PE curriculum.

2.4 Cycle Hire



Cycle Hire Centre at the Eco Centre

As part of the project, we were keen to set up a cycle hire service which was both affordable and accessible. In May 2009, the first cycle hire centre was set up in an empty unit based in the Eco Centre near the seafront. After some consideration, Pashley Pronto bikes were chosen as the main adult bike to be offered and 100 were purchased.

Over the coming months, numerous children's bikes, tag-a-longs, trailers and child seats were also added to the fleet.

We also held an event inviting hotels to participate in the scheme and 6 of the larger hotels are now actively involved in the scheme. The hotels each hold some of the bikes and hire direct to their customers.

In the summer of 2009, Merseyrail were successful in securing funding from Cycling England's 'Finding New Solutions' project to integrate cycle and rail.

As part of this bid, a cycle centre was built at Southport Station to provide secure cycle parking. Through our partnership with Merseyrail, it seemed the ideal opportunity to expand the cycle hire scheme and open our second centre in the town. In June 2010, the cycle centre opened providing cycle hire and a cycle maintenance service alongside the cycle parking. Being situated in the station, the centre provides visitors to Southport with the opportunity to hire a bike the moment they step off the train.



Pashley Cycle Hire Bicycles



Southport Cycle Centre at Southport Station

Cost of Hire

When the cycle hire scheme started, the charges for hires were £3.00 for up to 4 hours and £5.00 for a full day. These charges were increased in Year 2 to £4.00 for 4 hours and £6.00 for a full day. This year, they were increased to £6.00 and £8.00 respectively however the charges are still amongst some of the cheapest in the country. Additionally, a range of family and group discounts have now also been added.

Numbers of Hires

In year 1, from May 2009 through to March 2010, 825 bicycles were hired through the scheme, this increased in year 2 to 1449 hires. Generally the half day hires are more popular with 83% of the hires in Year 1 being for half days and 91% in year 2. The scheme has many repeat customers due to the high quality of the service offered and the opportunities for cycling in and around Southport.

The cycle hire scheme is still running and it is hoped over the coming years that the scheme will continue to expand with more centres opening and more hotels and tourist destinations agreeing to run remote centres for their customers.



2.5 Events

Tour Series & Cycling Festival

As part of the project, Southport was able to take part in the highly successful Tour Series both in 2009 and 2010.

The televised events allowed us to showcase Southport and both were attended by thousands of spectators. To run alongside the tour series races, we also organised family orientated cycling festivals.



Tour Series Race on Lord Street



'Bling My Bike' Competition

These included a 'bling my bike' competition, parades involving both vintage and new bikes, a cycling themed circus marquee, street theatre entertainment, a bike stunt display and an information tent providing details of the Southport Cycle Town project in addition to details of the cycle hire scheme now available in Southport.

The festivals were very popular and provided an opportunity for residents and visitors to Southport to take part in the town centre festivities which provided a focal point for the Southport Cycle Town initiatives.

Inter-school races

As part of the Tour Series and Cycling Festival, inter school cycle races were held. Over 300 youngsters from secondary schools throughout Sefton received competitive race training from British Cycling trained staff on a weekly basis over a 3 month period.

The races were organised by Sefton's cycling development officer, CTC and Bike it officers and local cycling club members. A great deal of enthusiasm has been created for these races and so it is intended to continue with them making them an annual event.



Children training for inter-school races



TPT 21st Anniversary

Trans Pennine Trial Event – 21st anniversary

In June 2010, over 200 people helped Sefton celebrate the 21st anniversary of the Trans Pennine Trail. On foot, by bike, adapted cycle and horseback, on a very sunny day a large group of people, of all ages and abilities set off from Southport to follow the TPT route to its Liverpool border at Aintree. A relay baton was carried along the 15 mile route by a number of our valued volunteers who support Sefton's cycling and walking programmes. A truly amazing event enjoyed by all who took part.

2.6 Cycle Rides

During 2009 and 2010, from April to October, regular evening and weekend led rides were run from Dunes Leisure Centre on the Esplanade in Southport. These complemented the school based evening family cycle rides which utilise the Bike it schools as their starting point.

During the period of the project we increased these school based rides from 1 or 2 per year to 4 or 5.

The leisure centre rides attracted regular participants but the number remained low, usually in single figures, despite increased promotion. Those that did take part really enjoyed them. The school-based family rides had numbers exceeding 100 on almost all of them, often with several generations of a family taking part

All of these rides gave the team the opportunity to showcase the local amenities and demonstrate how easy and enjoyable it is to explore the local area by bike.

A number of regular rides have evolved whilst the project has been running, including the Saturday morning Cycling Belles (lady only rides), Wednesday morning Community Health and the Thursday morning Over 50's. All these rides attract significant regular numbers and continue to thrive and attract new participants.

Regular family cycle maintenance sessions have been held at Woodvale Community Centre at the south end of Southport to meet the continuing demand for these skills. These have been organised as part of the CTC Cycle Champions and Bike Club projects.



2.7 Adult Cycle Training



From April to October during 2010 and 2011 we ran continuous Adult Cycle Training Courses from Dunes Leisure Centre. The courses took place in the evenings and weekends (2 per week) and catered for both complete beginners and people who just lacked confidence. We had previously run only 3 or 4 adult training courses per year, but being part of the cycle town project gave us the opportunity to significantly increase the number of courses, and hopefully the number of participants.

The result was that the courses took place with fewer cyclists than we were used to but overall the number of participants per year was similar to previous years. People who took part were very complimentary about the courses and felt they benefited from the smaller groups.



2.8 Marketing & Publicity

Website

We decided to set up a dedicated cycle town website for Southport www.southportcycletown.gov.uk which is embedded within the Sefton website but also has its own identity.

The design is based on the branding which we developed for the project and which will continue for the coming years.

The website includes details of what we have done throughout the project and acts as an information point for anyone wanting to hire a bike or find out about the wonderful cycle routes within Southport.



Flyers

Over the course of the project, we have also developed our own style of flyers for the different elements of the scheme and have regular reprints in excess of 10,000. The flyers are used to promote cycle hire, maintenance, rides, training and the 7 themed leisure routes



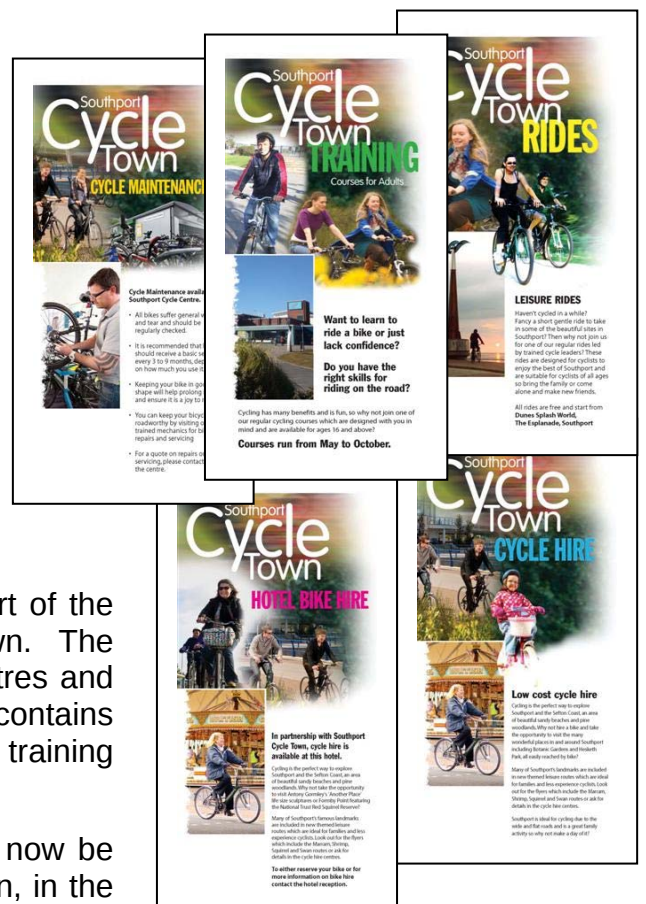
Advertising

We also advertise quite often in publications and event programmes with particular emphasis on the cycle hire scheme and cycle routes.

A3 Map

One of the first ideas we were keen to explore as part of the project was to produce an A3 tear off map of the town. The map (overleaf) shows the cycle routes, cycle hire centres and other facilities within the town. The rear of the map contains top cycling tips, details of our cycle hire, rides and training schemes in addition to our full contact details.

This map has proved very popular and the pads can now be found in many reception areas in the hotels in the town, in the tourist information centres and in our cycle hire centres.



KEY

- Marram Cycle Route
- Shrimp Cycle Route
- Other Cycle Routes
- Pedestrianised
- Railway Station
- Cycle Hire Centre
- Tourist Information Centre

- Dunes Splash World
- OP Ocean Plaza
- CP Coach Set Down Point
- New Pleasureland
- Model Yacht Lake
- Southport Theatre & Convention Centre
- Model Railway



Southport
Cycle Town

www.southportcycletown.gov.uk

Southport became a Cycling Town in June 2008. This means we get extra funding to deliver lots of exciting cycling projects such as the cycle hire scheme, increased cycle parking and new cycling routes. For full details of all the Southport Cycling Town activities, visit: www.southportcycletown.gov.uk

Lots more information overleaf...

2.9 Monitoring

This report sets out a wide range of outputs from the Southport Cycle Town project. In order to measure the outcomes of the programme we undertook a range of monitoring activities to evaluate the success of the project. The results of these, and data from other towns, will be set out in future reports by the Department for Transport, which we look forward to. As many of the infrastructure projects, including those aimed at the leisure / tourism market, were delivered over the 2010/11 winter period it won't be possible to determine the effects of these until after the 2011 summer season. However, we are already using data and will continue to monitor through the following:



- Counts of cycles – From 6 automatic cycle counters pre-2008 we now have 12 counters
- Continuously monitoring the main traffic-free routes around the town. Regular cycle parking counts also take place in the town centre and at schools and stations
- 12 hour cyclist surveys - before and after surveys at major new infrastructure sites
- User surveys - questionnaire surveys for Cycle Hire users, surveys along two key cycle corridors, data gained through Bike it and School Travel Plans
- Town Centre Mode share - through biennial town centre mode share cordon as part of the Merseyside mode share cordon counts
- Cycle Hire and website use.

2.10 Reflections



The Southport Cycle Town project could be described as interesting, emotive and sometimes frustrating. The programme was mostly implemented as intended, with a few changes along the way to adapt to local issues and new opportunities. Early on it became apparent that the proposed major developments were not going to be delivered in the current economic climate and so adjustments had to be made, particularly to the leisure package to ensure provision of a cohesive network around the seafront.

The success of the project was due to the overall package - the combination of new infrastructure, more training, practical advice and fun! Specific elements that stand out as particularly successful include our work with schools and the development of the leisure network and Cycle Hire scheme.

Promoting cycling can be very labour intensive, although some of our biggest achievements have been born through using volunteers and continuing to build relationships with those we have engaged along the way.

Southport is a typical seaside resort with a large retired population and we have been particularly successful in working with this segment of the population, initially through adult cycle training schemes, but then continuing to build relationships through a personal approach by offering other activities, maintaining support and in time, encouraging them to become volunteers themselves.

In the future we will continue to develop the three key themes of the Southport Cycle Town strategy and use the lessons learnt to continue to promote cycling across the whole of the borough.



